

Undersea

Story by Lt. Ben Cooper
Photos by PA2 Scott Epperson



Every day Atlantis Submarines and Voyager Submarines of Hawaii offer a unique experience for passengers to view the abundant underwater marine life living in the tropical waters of Hawaii.

Since 1994, Atlantis and Voyager Submarines have safely taken over 40,000 Oahu passengers under the sea to experience this memorable adventure. Currently, the only commercial submarines operating in U.S. waters are in St. Thomas, U.S. Virgin Islands, and throughout the 14th Coast Guard District in Oahu, Maui, Guam, and the Big Island of Hawaii.

All commercial submarines that operate in U.S. waters are inspected and certified for operation by Coast Guard inspectors. In Oahu, the commercial submarines have an excellent safety record. But what would happen if there was a submarine accident or if a passenger had a medical emergency and needed immediate treatment? How would the Coast Guard and the local marine community respond?



*Above: A Barbours Point HH-65 helicopter flies toward a Voyager submarine off Waikiki Beach.
Inset: Submarine pilot talks to a diver during a rescue demonstration on the sea floor.*

Air Rescues





An HH-65 Green Hornet hoists ASME2 Keith Brannan from the deck of one of the participating submarines.

These were some of the questions the 14th Coast Guard District addressed when it sponsored a series of search and rescue exercises with Atlantis and Voyager Submarines and members of the local marine salvage community. The exercises were designed to help the Coast Guard and members of the local community develop a better understanding of each other, as well as review the equipment and procedures used for search and rescue. These exercises included helicopter hoist training off the deck of the submarines operating in Oahu, Maui, and the Big Island of Hawaii.

A commercial submarine emergency response workshop was held in November to bring together members from the 14th District, Group Honolulu and Marine Safety Office Honolulu, as well as representatives from the U. S. Navy, Atlantis and Voyager Submarines, and members of the local marine salvage community. The meeting

provided an opportunity for the participants to become familiar with one another, to discuss the assets and capabilities of the different organizations, as well as review the design and safety features of the subs.

This meeting was followed by a familiarization dive aboard an Atlantis submarine for all participants. The Atlantis crew demonstrated the safety and emergency systems of the sub during a dive off Waikiki Beach, Oahu. ASME2 Keith

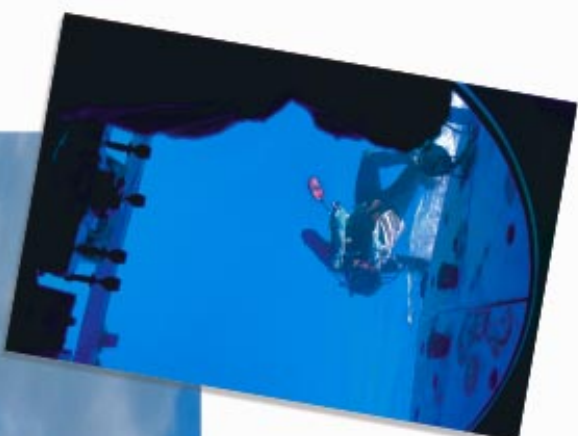
Brannan, a rescue swimmer from Air Station Barber's Point and Cmdr. Dick Howel, 14th District chief of search and rescue, demonstrated helicopter hoist and safety gear. This event was followed by a visit to a submarine in drydock and helicopter hoist training for the submarine crewmembers.

On Dec. 20, 1995, an HH-65 helicopter from Air Station Barber's Point conducted helicopter hoists with both tourist submarine companies off Oahu. It was a great success according to Brannan.

Operating Submarines

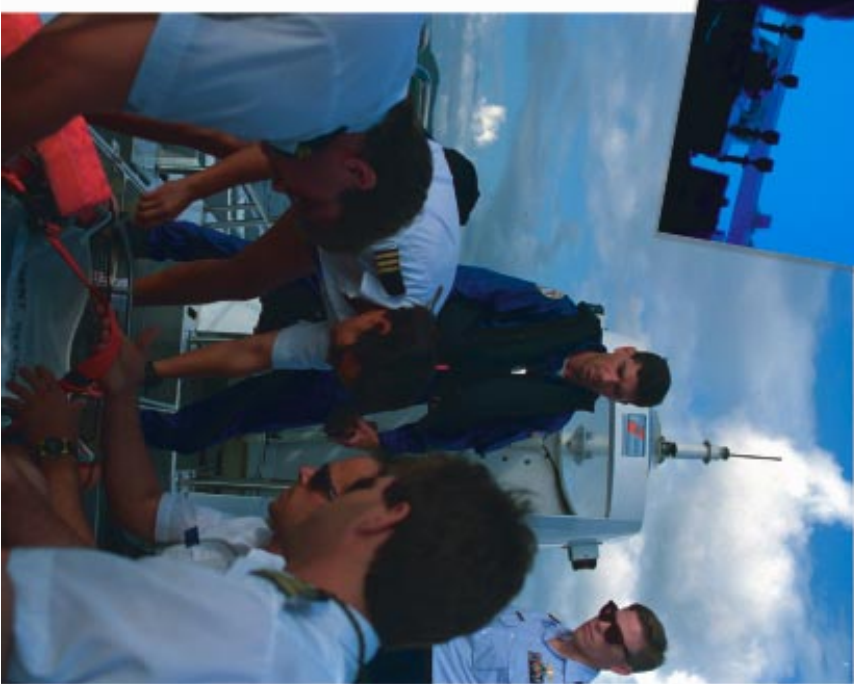
Atlantis

Bahamas	1
St. Thomas, USVI.....	1
Barbados	1
Guam	1
Aruba	1
Waikiki, Hawaii	3
Lahaina, Hawaii	1
Kona, Hawaii	1
Grand Cayman Island.....	1
Cancun, Mexico	1
Voyager	
Waikiki, Hawaii	2



Left: A diver checks with the pilot of an Atlantis submarine during an emergency bottom-recovery demonstration off Waikiki Beach.

Bottom: ASME1 Robin N. Fiske and Lt. Ben Cooper with the crew of an Atlantis submarine use a Sloc o' tiler during training off Maui.



"You couldn't ask for a better training scenario" he said. Brannan trained the sub crews to receive the helicopter basket and place an injured person in it. Each sub crew practiced placing the rescue swimmer in a rescue basket and communicating with the helicopter hoist operator.

Based on the overwhelming success of the helicopter and submarine exercises in Oahu, similar training was scheduled with the Atlantis subs operating in Maui and the Big Island of Hawaii. In early February, Coast Guard helicopter crews conducted hoist training exercises with the Atlantis crews operating in Kailua-Kona, Hawaii, and Lahaina, Maui. Coast Guard Auxiliary members and Station Maui personnel provided vital assistance by enforcing safety zones for the SAREX. According to ASME1 Robin N. Fiske of Air Station Barber Point, who trained the Maui and Kailua-Kona submarine crews, "We hope we never need to do a helicopter evacuation from the subs, but if we do, these guys will be ready." 